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Writing Rocks:
Restoration and Excavation in 19th Century Scientific Georgic

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Writing Rocks:
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by

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Abstract

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This is a paper about Canto IV of Lord Byron's long narrative poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. It demonstrates the ways in which that poem makes use of both georgic themes and the theories of Catastrophist geology current at the end of the eighteenth century. In short, these two lenses create a mode of poetry in which Byron can view the ruins of Italian culture being consumed by nature in a positive, revolutionary, regenerative light. The paper concludes by contrasting this attitude of Byron's to Victorian attitudes toward ruins in the wake of Uniformitarianism. Readings of the archaeological site at Pompeii, Matthew Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," and Darwin's later work demonstrate that late-19th-century scientific georgic cultivates an ethos of preservation and a desire for human agency.

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I.

This paper's agenda is multifold. In the first place, it sets out to illuminate the manner in which Byron records his encounters with Italian ruins and monuments in Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. In so doing, it notes how the main modes Byron employs as he mediates his surroundings—the georgic mode he adapts from Virgil, and the geological lens fitted for him by contemporaneous scientific discourse—have been elucidated by important recent critical conversations. These conversations about the georgic and about geology seldom touch on Byron, and have not previously been brought into dialogue with each other, so this paper's forging of such connections is itself novel and makes for novel opportunities to reflect on why and how the georgic, geological discourse, and Byronic poetry should have such commonalities. The georgic now appears to many literary historians to have been the dominant mode for the poetry of the late eighteenth century and early Romantic periods. One of the goals of this paper is to extend critical conversations about georgic forward into the late Romantic period—the time of Byron—and further still into the Victorian period. Another goal is to draw parallels between the georgic's mediatory power and the modes in which geology and its related sciences, excavation and archaeology, are conducted. Just as the georgic, given its origins in a genre of poetry about farming, starts from the formation of the landscape through working the land with such implements as plows, shovels, and seeds, geology, the study of geological strata, involves both the earth's work in reshaping itself—whether by rivers coursing through the earth or mountains erupting out of the earth's crust—as well as the digging that humans do to extract evidence of temporal change, extinct species, and long-lost human cultures. Once the affinity between georgic and geological discourse is recognized, it becomes possible to relate Kevis Goodman's discussion of the georgic's importance for media theory to various recent studies of the impact of

the deep-time science geology, and, ultimately, to recent accounts of the evolutionary theory to which it directly leads—to the criticism, that is, has sprung from the fertile grounds of Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots*, including the work of such noted critics as Noah Heringman, Charles Rzepka, and John Wyatt.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the ends for which poets deploy the georgic mode change as geology casts Catastrophism aside and settles into a narrative of Uniformitarian deep time. Thus, I will follow my reading of Byron, which finds early nineteenth century geology leading from a revolutionary to a poetic mode in which the georgic cycle of seasons provides a perfect metaphor for the ability for the earth to renew itself, offering fresh chances for improved cultures, with a coda on the Victorian period and georgic in the wake of Charles Lyell. I will take as a centerpiece for this closing discussion Matthew Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," another poem in which the speaker or poet travels to the site of an ancient, outworn culture and views its ruins (a popular exercise in the Victorian period, as we will see as my readings progress). Whereas Byron can look on ruins, describe them, and move on, easy in the belief that georgic geological cycles will efface the scars of history and create new landscapes for other men to explore, Arnold's speaker fixates on the modes by which his poetic subjects—both the abbey at Grande Chartreuse and the monks which inhabit it—work (perhaps futilely) to counteract and negate the ruin into which the building and the Judeo-Christian culture itself are falling.

I posit that the change that occurs between Byron and Arnold—a gradual transformation from burying the artifacts of (often violent) history in fertile, organic rural visions to a longing to preserve and inhabit that history as it is upturned by the poet's georgic work—is a result of the revelation of deep time brought forward by the sciences of evolution and geology. As ruins are

inevitably reincorporated—both literally and aesthetically, as we will see in Noah Heringman's criticism—into rocky nature, they lose altogether their potential for meaning. Arnold's poetry, like other artifacts of Victorian scientific culture, is desperate to recover that history even as it is irrevocably lost.

II.

The georgic is familiar to classical scholars and to scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries alike as Virgil's middle, didactic genre: not the high mode of *The Aeneid* nor the low pastoral *Eclogues*, but that of *The Georgics* – the intermediate work about work, a poem in four parts on man's working relationship with the landscape and creatures that he productively husbands in the wake of the Roman civil wars. Neither *Childe Harolde* nor "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" deal immediately or obviously with the raising of crops, sheep, or bees, so this paper will focus on georgic as a genre and georgic as interpreted by Kevis Goodman in her study of it as a mode which creates a medium for interpretive work, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History*. Goodman opens by identifying the tableau which she calls "a good candidate" for the single "representative anecdote for the pervasive georgic influence in eighteenth century poetry:" a scene from the end of the first book of Virgil's *Georgics* which, in the translation which Goodman cites, illustrates a certain (if distant) future when "in those lands, as the farmer toils at the soil with crooked plough, he shall find javelins eaten up with rusty mould, or with his heavy hoes shall strike on empty helms, and marvel at the giant bones in the upturned graves" (1). Using this evocative image as georgic's predominant metaphor in the eighteenth (and nineteenth) centuries,[1] Goodman typifies georgic *versus* (both the Latin word for lines—verses—and the perfect passive participle for the verb "to turn") as the material mode for turning both up and under the material residue of history. Georgic, then, deals both with "the difficulty of treating or recreating the

1 While Goodman does not deal extensively with the nineteenth century and, indeed, contends that in the Romantic period georgic is more affective mode and trope rather than clearly defined genre, she, like Kurt Heinzelman in his "Roman Georgic in a Georgian Age," contends that its existence as an influential undercurrent is important for Romantic poetry (Goodman 10). For a more extended discussion of the prevalence of georgic mode and ethos in the Romantic period, see the "Maritime Georgic" chapter of Sam Baker's *Written on the Water* (84-6).

historical process as a present participle…rather than as a past perfect" as well as the mode by which "historical presentness is often 'turned up'…as *unpleasurable* feeling: as sensory discomfort, as disturbance in affect" (3-4). While this engagement with discomfort constitutes one of the primary tasks of both Byron's and Arnold's poems, their reactions to and willingness to dwell in and preserve that discomfort wildly differ.

According to Goodman's study, the eighteenth century georgic had a firm foundation in emerging sciences, particularly those that did the work of extending sensory perception over both time and space. Mapping a history through the writings of Bacon, Hooke, and Joseph Addison, Goodman tracks the progress of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' interest in the "artificial organs" provided by the microscope and other advances in the science of optics through Addison's use of the *Georgics* "to define the advantages of poetry as an epistemological instrument…capable of positioning the subject so that percept and precept 'enter as it were through a by-way'" (22). Goodman's study further advances this metaphor of vision, perception, and the modes of knowledge which science provides for the georgic through a study of Cowper's attempt to grapple with a perception extended by newspapers and empire through all parts of the world.

This paper will work to demonstrate the use of the georgic mode outside of the eighteenth century science reviewed by Addison. Whatever their relation to the sciences that Goodman tracks, the georgic conventions of extended gaze and epistemological cultivation also break poetic ground in the emerging sciences of geology, paleontology, and excavation, where the georgic *versus* stretches both forward and backward in time in its anxiety to preserve and extend

the knowledge and artifacts which its lines turn up. [2]More pointedly, I discuss how georgic agency and georgic objects shift over the course of the nineteenth century as geological discourses change from a cyclical, generative vision of Catastrophism to a vision of human culture as, like the substance of the earth itself, slowly consumed into unrecognizable nature with no promise of regeneration.

In order for that change to be fully registered, we must note the status of georgics and geology at the beginning of the century; to this end, I offer as a case study an examination of how these modes figure in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Byron's poem presents the reader with a number of problems, not least of which is that of categorization, an issue the poet seems determined to confuse. The pilgrimage, such as it is, occurs over four "cantos", published separately. Each book is composed of around a hundred stanzas (although the fourth book is considerably longer); their stanzas are Spenserian, the neglected form of Spenser's epic *Fairie Queene*. Its deliberate formal archaism aside, the poem still seems to declare itself medievalist: Harold is a "childe," or a nobleman's son who is not a knight, and the title declares that he would go on a "pilgrimage," a favorite medieval religious and social activity. Perhaps most perplexing is that the poem's subject is not only a pilgrimage but also, according to its subtitle, a "romaunt." To demystify this odd category and gesture toward an important part of this paper, I turn to Noah Heringman for a discussion of the nineteenth century and "romance" as a medieval(ist) genre. As a physically descriptive adjective, the term "romantic"

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2 In this paper I will follow the convention of Noah Heringman's *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology* in using the word geology to refer not only to the established modern scientific discipline but also, as Heringman writes, "to refer to geological subject matter rather than method. Until recently, 'history of geology' meant the history and prehistory of the modern discipline by that name, not a history of 'thinking about the earth.' Richard Hamblyn has led the way in the latter direction, showing how geology appropriated and transformed its subject matter" (27).

> in both Austen and Whitehurst refers to the broken or dislocated character of the landforms…the agency behind these large-scale changes is barely imaginable, sublime, strengthening the landscape's association with the fantastic. Through its fantastic or enchanted appearance, such a landscape belongs to the genre of romance and the literary past. It also belongs to the geological past, a time so remote that its vestiges can be read only as signs of obscure, titanic processes. The time of chivalry provides a literary analogue for the enchanted past of geology, as the Gothic provides an architectural one. (4)

By pointing in his subtitle to French chivalric romance, Byron might be read as gesturing not only toward a past, enchanted landscape, but also more specifically toward his concerns with the trappings of the similarly barely imaginable, fantastic, sublime landscapes that the early nineteenth century associates with the "obscure, titanic processes" of geology as well as those of an indefinite medieval period. Indeed, the experience of reading *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is an odd one, temporally speaking, for precisely this reason: the poem consciously works to collapse, palimpsest-like, the landscapes of long-past battles and imperialism, the Napoleonic War, and some remote feudal period. As a result, when Childe Harold, in the first stanzas of the first canto, deserts the "vast and venerable pile" of his ancestral home, time seems to speed up, allowing him to imagine, as he sails away from England, that its hearth has immediately grown "desolate; / Wild weeds are gathering on the wall" (ln 56, 131-132). The period, then, is simultaneously vaguely feudal (the vast and venerable pile still stands inhabited by Harold's mother and sister) and situated in a time scale that progresses with strange rapidity.

This compressed time-scale, together with the "obscure, titanic processes" which *Childe Harold* catalogs, reflect Byron's interest in the emerging scientific discipline of geology, an interest which scholars widely acknowledge but rarely discuss at length. Despite the fact that those scholars who have taken the time to examine Byron's relationship to science unanimously agree that he was at least interested in the subject, well-read in the works of Cuvier, and fond of discussing the subject with friend and fellow poet Percy Shelley, critics tend to limit their

discussion of science in Byron's poetry on *Cain*. Indeed, the most extensive discussion of Byron's knowledge of geology available, Ralph O'Connor's "Mammoths and Maggots: Byron and the Geology of Cuvier," asserts that "Any discussion of Byron's attitude towards the sciences must begin with his drama *Cain*" (27). It is perhaps because of this persistent attention to a single poem that, as O'Connor rightly notes, "Byron's delight in the sciences has hardly been touched upon, despite a rising interest in the relationship between art and science in the Romantic age" (27)[3]. In another discussion of Byron's scientific knowledge, William Brewer's *The Shelley-Byron Conversation*, Brewer devotes most of his attention to Shelley's reading and interest. Heringman, in *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology*, devotes only a couple of pages to Byron, once again as a subsidiary or by-line to his discussion of how Shelley's interest in catastrophist, diluvialist science and paleontology contributes to a reading of his sublime, apocalyptic Alpine landscapes.

Byron's fascination with the sciences, and particularly with emerging theories on the age and construction of the earth, is worth paying attention to in its own right, particularly given the ways in which the scientific theories that preoccupied him tend to crop up in his verse. Most critics who have made any reference to Byron's interest in science acknowledge his familiarity

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33 For a discussion of the birth of scholarly interest in the scientific proclivities of Romantic literature, see the introduction of Wyatt's *Wordsworth and the Geologists*. However, since much of Wyatt's study discusses geological discoveries taking place after Byron's death and the influence of Wordsworth's poetry on various generations of geologists, I will deal very little with his (admittedly important) book. Indeed, Wyatt himself notes in his conclusion that his study "leads to a proposal that writers like Shelley and Byron (and to a lesser extent John Keats in his occasional reference to the origins of natural features) sought their inspiration from a different social and scientific group than those with whom Wordsworth found compatibility and intellectual comfort" (217). This is, of course, a vestige of the conservatism of the later Wordsworth as opposed to the revolutionary strains which inspired the second generation Romantics—a proposal supported by O'Connor's assessment of Cuvier's theory (like the evolutionary theories of such continental natural philosophers as Lamarcke) as associated with revolution.

with Cuvier, the French geologist whose work with regard to the discovery, in 1799, of a fossilized mammoth carcass "confirmed Cuvier's suspicions that various local and global catastrophes had suddenly exterminated faunas at various times in the Earth's long history; and his researches into strata furnished ample geological evidence for these 'revolutions'" (O'Connor 32). Although O'Connor goes to some length to point out that Cuvier's theories, like those of most scientists speculating on the age of the earth before Darwin, make no assertions that humankind has been created and destroyed as many times over as the world has, neither Byron nor Shelley seem to have scrupled over the distinction. Brewer quotes a letter from Shelley to Elizabeth Hitchener, written in 1811, in which Shelley imagines, after the fashion of the French naturalist Georges Buffon,

> the myriad ages whose silent change placed [mountains] here, to look back when perhaps this retirement of peace and mountain simplicity, was the Pandemonium of druidical imposture, the scene of Roman Pollution…Still, still further!—strain thy reverted Fancy when no rocks, no lakes no cloud-soaring mountains were here, but a vast populous and licentious city stood in the midst of an immense plain, myriads flocked towards it; London itself scarcely exceeds it in the variety, the extensiveness of [or?] consummateness of its corruption! (28)

As Brewer notes, Shelley's distinction is not only between the current unpopulated state of "peace and mountain simplicity" as opposed to the destroyed civilization's "consummate corruption," but a distinction of elevation: Shelley imagines the ages thrusting a mountain right through the heart of this "licentious city," destroying its civilization in a single catastrophic sweep.

It is clear that catastrophism creates a world that can transform itself. As a result, it opens up for Byron a "dynamic universe" in which revolution is a natural occurrence, so that Byron's quotations from Cuvier in Cain allow him to imagine "prehistorical civilizations" with "'rational beings much more intelligent than man, and proportionably powerful to the mammoth'" (Brewer 32). Thus, the theory of catastrophism seems to discover for Byron as well as for Shelley a world

of vast creative and destructive potential, even if Byron's satires often take the line that each successive creation of rational beings is a decline from the last—a theme which mythologically obsessed readers will quickly associate with various classical accounts of what Judeo-Christian cultures refer to as the "Fall of man" from a pre-lapsarian Golden Age to a post-lapsarian Iron Age through degeneration and decline, including those found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Hesiod's *Works and Days*, and—happily for the premise of this paper—Virgil's *Georgics*. While the last of these provides perhaps the most abbreviated account of declining ages of man, a theodicy on the post-lapsarian, laboring state does occupy a portion of the argument of the first book. Importantly, Jove's justification for forcing man to toil and suffer is to ennoble him sufficiently through work and art. And indeed, Byron's satiric accounts of catastrophic successions of civilization also take a literally georgic turn, as we see in this passage from *Don Juan*:

> *How* will – to these young people, just thrust out
> From some fresh Paradise, and set to plough,
> And dig, and sweat, and turn themselves about,
> And plant, and reap, and spin, and grind, and sow,
> Till all the Arts at length are brought about,
> Especially of war and taxing, - how,
> I say, will these great relics, when they see 'em,
> Look like the monsters of a new Museum? (IX, 313-20)

While O'Connor's close reading of these lines asks the reader to focus on the "drudgery" created by the repeated use of the word "and," concluding that triviality rather than dignity is afforded to these post-lapsarian young people (37), I would like to direct attention to the direct connections drawn, within such passages, between georgic activity (plowing, digging, sweating, planting, reaping) and the great, monstrous relics of the previous catastrophe, perhaps turned up by the tips of their own plows—just as they are, of course, at the end of the first book of Virgil's *Georgics*. If, then, georgic activity, relics, and catastrophism can coexist in one of the satires of the

famously fickle Byron, it seems perfectly possible that they might do so in a serious capacity in his other works as well.

Such coexistence seems all the more likely in light of Byron's high opinion of the georgics as a poetic genre or mode. In James K. Chandler's discussion of the Romantics' battle of letters over the reputation of the character of Pope (and with it the repute of the poetry of the eighteenth century), he quotes from an essay in which Byron firmly aligns himself with the eighteenth century and Pope against the Romantics. In between defaming his opponent's character and concluding that Pope remains among history's best poets, Byron posits that Pope's decline in the canon has resulted from an unfair devaluation of the modes in which Pope worked, especially the mode of ethical poetry:

> In my mind, the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth. Religion does not make a part of my subject; it is something beyond human powers, and has failed in all human hands except Milton's and Dante's …And if ethics have made a philosopher the first of men, and have not been disclaimed as an adjunct to the Gospel by the Deity himself, are we to be told that ethical poetry, or didactic poetry, or by whatever name you term it, whose object is to make men better and wiser, is not the *very first order* of poetry…? It requires more mind, more wisdom, more power, than all the 'forests' that were ever 'walked for their description,' and all the epics that ever were founded upon fields of battle. The *Georgics* are indisputably, and, I believe, *undisputedly*, even a finer poem than the *Aeneid*. Virgil knew this; he did not order *them* to be burnt. (554)

We can find, littered throughout this passage, signs of Byron's irony and rhetorical flexibility (Byron, while fond of satire and other eighteenth century forms, does not necessarily adhere to clear moral didacticism in his own poetry) as well as a less-than-veiled critique of the lake poets against whom Byron waged this particular battle.[4] Nevertheless, he allies himself here with both Virgil's *Georgics* in particular and didactic modes of poetry in general. This defense of georgic didacticism is all the stronger when read in conjunction with the use of that particular mode in

4 For a more full account Byron's vitriol against the first generation Romantics, see James K. Chandler on the "Pope Controversy: Romantic Poetics and the English Canon."

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Like the first-generation-Romantic, loco-descriptive poetry which Byron maligns for its lack of "mind," "wisdom," and "power," *Childe Harold* depends on Byron's own touristic, loco-descriptive accounts of the landscapes of Spain, Greece, the Alps, and Italy. Many of these sites also happen to be "founded upon the fields of battle." And, of course, Virgil's own *Georgics* themselves blend the language and tropes of both pastoral poetry and epic language to achieve their middle form.

Childe Harold's mixed genre, then, is tied together less by its vague chivalric influences[5] than by its continual progress through closely observed landscape and its use of the georgic language and conventions which we have already observed Byron praise in Pope's poetry.[6] In

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5 Indeed, Byron often forgets the chivalric premise of his hero (he asks, "Where is Harold?" after one particularly dramatic reverie in the second canto) and even openly abandons the conceit in the fourth canto. In a letter to Hobhouse, Byron writes that "there will be found less of the pilgrim than in any of the preceding, and that little slightly, if at all, separated from the author speaking in his own person. The fact is, that I had become weary of drawing a line which every one seemed determined not to perceive" (130). It goes without saying that the poem's shift from a (nominally) fictional character's journey to undisguised autobiography presents yet more issues both interpretively and generically.

6 This does, indeed, occur throughout the poem, although I have chosen to focus on the fourth canto in this paper. In the second canto, Byron's narrator addresses Greece:

> Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild;
> Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
> Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smiled,
> And still his honied wealth Hymettus yields;
> There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
> The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain-air;
> Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
> Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare;
> Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair. (ln 819-827)

The last line could hardly be clearer—"Nature still is fair"—but it is worth noting that the nature which Byron primarily imagines as redeeming Greece's war-torn and disappointingly plundered cultural landscape is the economically productive georgic of a second Golden Age: fruit and olive trees (the subject of the second book of the *Georgics*) yield as ripe and plentiful a harvest as it ever did when Greece was subject to its own gods only, and the "blithe bee," which gets its own book of Virgil's *Georgics* (book four), continues building its cells and producing honey.

the fourth canto, Byron repeatedly evokes georgic language in his descriptions of remains and memory. Venice's by-word is declared to be "The Planter of the Lion" (ln 120); "her dead Doges…their sword in rust, / Have yielded to the stranger" (128, 131-2), a choice of verb which suggests agricultural or economic productivity as it intimates that the doges of Venice have succumbed to history. Even the act of war itself is likened to the driving of cattle—"fetter'd thousands bore the yoke of war" (137). In a diatribe on Tasso Byron also cannot resist the urge to liken Duke Alfonso II to one "form'd to eat, and be despised, and die, / Even as the beasts that perish, save that thou / Hadst a more splendid trough and wider sty" (334-6). In almost the same breath, he laments Torquato, the "victor unsurpass'd in modern song! / Each year," he continues, "brings forth its millions; but how long / The tide of generations shall roll on" remains unknown(346-8). Byron's imagery here simultaneously evokes themes of fertility, of the ocean, and of a sense of deep, endless time in which mankind might fail to produce additional Torquatos.

It is not only language evocative of georgic production that runs through this canto, then, but also themes which Virgil's *Georgics* themselves take great pains to handle. As I have already mentioned, the end of the first book of *The Georgics* contains a theodicy, a justification of suffering and toil: according to Virgil, Jove ended the Golden Age, giving the snake venom and the wolf savagery as well as making food more difficult to access, so that humans might be forced to toil, suffer, and thereby ennoble themselves through the arts. In the wake of his reflections on Venice as an imagined city, Byron takes a maudlin turn to contemplate the nature of suffering and labor:

> Existence may be borne, and the deep root
> Of life and sufferance make its firm abode
> In bare and desolated bosoms; mute
> The camel labours with the heaviest load,

And the wolf dies in silence,—not bestow'd
In vain should such example be; if they,
Things of ignoble or of savage mood,
Endure and shrink not, we of nobler clay
May temper it to bear,—it is but for a day.

…And how and why we know not, nor can trace
Home to its cloud this lightning of the mind,
But feel the shock renew'd, nor can efface
The blight and blackening which it leaves behind… (ln 181-198, 208-211).

Existence itself plays the role of georgic burden: it is both carried and takes "deep root / of life and sufferance" in even the most "desolated bosoms." Camels and wolves share man's georgic burden of a fallen world. "Suffering" continues to dominate the next stanza, where Byron enumerates various coping methods for the fallen state he has described, where his subjects resemble, respectively, a spider, an ill-tended tree, and a labourer subjected to a certain amount of determinism of the soul. Most curiously, even when subdued these grievances are subject still to a sort of natural disaster, a "lightning of the mind" which leaves "blight and blackening" in its wake regardless of what these "georgics of the mind," as Goodman would put it, have taken the trouble of cultivating. And it is not only man's mental trials, tribulations, and misfortunes that are described in clear terms of georgic. Italy, as a literal landscape, is ripe for metaphors of cultivation:

…who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became
A funeral dower of present woes and past
On thy sweet brow is sorrow plough'd by shame... (370-373)

Italy has a mixed status in these lines. Just as the mind is a georgic landscape which learns to cultivate the burden of suffering, Italy participates in the topoi of mental georgics: it is imagined as possessing a brow rather than a number of fields to yield "sorrow" to plows of "shame." The curse of both of these mental landscapes is, of course, that of toil.

Byron's conversation with the georgic does not end with incomplete theodicy: Canto IV will revisit the georgic trope of embattled landscape (questionably) restored by labor at Thrasimene. Passing from an art gallery back into Nature, Byron's narrator moves quickly into that once war-torn space:

> Like to a forest fell'd by mountain winds;
> And such the storm of battle on this day,
> And such the frenzy, whose convulsion blinds
> To all save carnage, that, beneath the fray,
> An earthquake reel'd unheededly away!
> None felt stern Nature rocking at his feet,
> And yawning forth a grave for those who lay
> Upon their bucklers for a winding sheet;
> Such is the absorbing hate when warring nations meet!
>
> The Earth to them was as a rolling bark
> Which bore them to Eternity; they saw
> The Ocean round, but had no time to mark
> The motions of their vessel Nature's law,
> In them suspended, reck'd not of the awe
> Which reigns when mountains tremble, and the birds
> Plunge in the clouds for refuge and withdraw
> From their down-toppling nests; and bellowing herds
> Stumble o'er heaving plains, and man's dread hath no words. (ln 559-576)

Art and Nature allow Byron to access the landscape at Thrasimene at multiple temporal points: he can experience the present day Thrasimene's exaggerated peacefulness as well as feel Hannibal's "warlike wiles / Come back before" him (553-4). These instances of collapsed time coincide with the use of words and phenomena associated with Catastrophism: the "frenzy" of war's "convulsion blinds / To all save carnage," so that the frenzy itself has the same catastrophic, geological status as the "earthquake [which] reel'd unheededly away" beneath the clashing armies' feet, making the earth "yawn forth" graves that speed the landscape's recovery from the dually catastrophic battle. In turn, the catastrophic battle between men blinds its players to the reality of Nature itself. Rather than see the earth for what it is—an awesome rock whose

mountains tremble, a place which birds, herds of beasts, and man's dread know to fear by "Nature's law"—the armies of men see earth as a gently "rolling bark" which will calmly carry them "to Eternity." They see the landscape, but do not meaningfully interact with it or map it. This suspension of natural law is all but swallowed by the land by the time Byron reaches Thrasimene: the lake is exaggeratedly smooth rather than rocked by earthquakes; the plain is "rent" by neither sword nor body nor catastrophic earthly convulsion, but is subject instead to the plow; "trees rise thick" in place of bodies, seemingly sprung forth from the graves where the earth swallowed corpses thousands of years before (577-585). Still, the georgic transformation of the plow remains incomplete: Byron, walking through the landscape, can experience the battle in memory, and can imagine that a "scanty" brook called "Sanguinetto" bears the memory of the blood that once stained it through the landscape. Despite the work of man and nature, Virgil's georgic vision does not come true. So far from rustics turning up the relics of war and puzzling over their meanings and contexts, even the trees which spring from the seeds of war's armaments bear the memory of the landscape's dreadful past, just as the geological record of this space would yield evidence of slaughtered armies.

Indeed, the success of human georgic endeavors seems dubious at best throughout the fourth canto. On the one hand, Florence receives repeated praise for the apparent golden age of agriculture and art which it continues to enjoy:

> But Arno wins us to the fair white walls,
> Where the Etrurian Athens claims and keeps
> A softer feeling for her fairy halls.
> Girt by her theatre of hills, she reaps
> Her corn, and wine, and oil, and Plenty leaps
> To laughing life, with her redundant horn.
> Along the banks where smiling Arno sweeps
> Was modern Luxury of Commerce born,
> And buried Learning rose, redeem'd to a new morn. (424-432)

Florence continues to enjoy an abundantly productive landscape and as a result, the stanza suggests, sweeps along an equally abundant "modern Luxury of Commerce" and resurrects "buried Learning" in its Renaissance, the effects of which it continues to enjoy. The air of abundance seems to be one which Florence can enjoy because it has largely succeeded in filling itself with the artifacts of artistic success: the Venus de Medici "fills the air around with beauty" and inhalable "ambrosial aspect" (432-434), and Santa Croce contains "Ashes which make it holier, dust which is / Even in itself an immortality" in the remains of Michaelangelo, Alfieri, Galileo, and Macchiavelli.[7] But it is not all it could be. Despite having amassed the remains—and with them the tangible, material cultural capital they carry—of these variously disillusioned and formerly contentious figures, "Ungrateful Florence!" has failed to collect "the all Etruscan three," Dante, Petrarch, and Boccacio, leaving its children to continue to "in vain adore [Dante in particular] / With the remorse of ages" (509-510).[8]

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[7] Elsewhere, Italy's historical tribulations are equally potentially generative:

…—Italy!
Time, which hath wrong'd thee with ten thousand rents
Of thine imperial garment, shall deny,
And hath denied, to every other sky
Spirits which soar from ruin:--thy decay
Is still impregnate with divinity,
Which gilds it with revivifying ray… (488-494)

Here is Byron's endorsement of Santa Croce's retention of "Ashes which make it holier, dust which is / Even in itself an immortality" (480): somehow, through the preservation of these "four minds" and the intervention of "the particle of those sublimities / Which have relapsed to chaos" (482-3), Italy's "decay" remains "impregnate" with the promise of divinity, even in total ruin. Again, the potential regeneration seems to be rooted in the catastrophic potential of the "particles" of "sublimities" and "chaos."

[8] It will not escape the reader that Florence's practice of amassing not merely artwork but also the remains of dead poets, artists, and political philosophers themselves in order to increase its cultural capital seems to partake of the same literalist, materialism as Elgin's theft of Athenian monuments. Byron's indignation at the absence of Dante's remains from Florence is similar to his emotions at the site of the Parthenon, as we will see later in this paper. A note in an 1899

As we have already seen, the "georgics of the mind" also pose a problematic and only possibly fruitful space for human cultivation. The fourth canto opens with the problem of man's imaginative creation of Venice:

> But unto us she hath a spell beyond
> Her name in story, and her long array
> Of mighty shadows, whose dim forms despond
> Above the dogeless city's vanish'd sway:
> Ours is a trophy which will not decay
> With the Rialto; Shylock and the Moor
> And Pierre can not be swept or worn away—
> The keystones of the arch! though all were o'er,
> For us repeopled were the solitary shore. (27-35)

Venice is as much a city raised and sustained by the imagination—indeed, by the work of British poets like Shakespeare, Thomas Otway, and of course Byron himself—as it is a material location, such that even if "all were o'er / for us repeopled were the solitary shore." In short, the real, inhabited space seems at this moment to have less existence in the world of the fourth canto than the figures of the imagination that would people it. The creation of these imaginary figures, in addition to being a product of the mind's creative toil, in turn revitalizes the mental landscapes from which they spring into the world that Byron literally inhabits. They "water…the heart whose early flowers have died,/ and with a fresher growth replenish…the void" (43-44) Nevertheless, these georgics of the mind, like the figures that populate them, prove to be transient at best: the "fairy-land" is nothing against the "strong reality" of "things," "shapes and hues" whose beauty surpasses anything sustainable by the mind's exercise alone (50-54).

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edition of *Childe Harold* explains his irritation at Petrarch's "rifled" grave: Petrach's time spent in Avignon and Arqua means, for Byron, that Florence and its legacy have no right to Petrarch's remains. He considers it a travesty that, after Petrarch's tomb had begun to decay, "An enthusiastic Florentine tried to steal the body of Petrarch, but only succeeded in carrying off an arm" (Morris 144). An account of the exhumation of Petrarch in 2003 by modern scientists looking to assess the DNA and bone structure of the poet's remains confirms that, in addition to the skull in the grave belonging to a woman instead of the famous poet, "One of Petrarch's fingers and part of his arm had been stolen as well" (Rosenthal 1).

Doubtful, too, are Byron's attempts (expressed in georgic language) at an eternizing conceit: he wonders, "should I lay / My ashes in a soil which is not mine, / My spirit shall resume it" (ln 73-75), or whether his "aspirations" will overreach their "scope," his "fortunes" be "Of hasty growth and blight," the laurels "light…on a loftier head," but resigns himself to the fact that "The thorns which I have reap'd are of the tree / I planted…I should have known what fruit would spring from such a seed" (ln 79-90). His own georgic efforts of "reaping," then, yield dubious results at best as well—partially, it is clear, as a result of his own careless discipline in planting.

A stronger anxiety still pervades Byron's survey of the Roman landscape: not merely that of bad or thorny crops, but of a totally sterile prospect. Rome is his "country! city of the soul!...Lone mother of dead empires!" and the narrator switches suddenly to the imperative to signify the necessity of inhabiting this space: "Come and see…and plod your way / O'er steps of broken thrones and temples—" (ln 694-700). The brokenness and lack of issue becomes clear as this section goes on:

> The Niobe of nations! there she stands,
> Childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe;
> An empty urn within her wither'd hands,
> Whose holy dust was scatter'd long ago:
> The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;
> The very sepulchers lie tenantless
> Of their heroic dwellers;--dost thou flow,
> Old Tiber, through a marble wilderness?
> Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress!

By imagining Rome as the "Niobe of nations," Byron indicates not only a nation which, like the legendary woman, has watched her promising and beloved children slain as a result of her hubris, but one which has long since been incapable of further issue: just as the weeping Niobe was turned to (leaky, weeping) stone through the pity of the gods, the "Old Tiber" flows "through a marble wilderness" by passing through Rome's thoroughly infertile landscape, its issue long since destroyed not by its own gods but by the increasingly immutable ravages of

"Goth, Christian, Time, War, Flood, and Fire" in vengeance for its "pride" (712-3). Rome, so far from being chartable for the voyaging antiquarian Byron, "is as the desert:" it forces its inhabitants to "steer stumbling o'er recollections" which occasionally yield "some false mirage of ruin" (721-9) This dry space, apparently impervious to georgic, might eventually be resurrected in the voice, poetry, and history of Cicero, Virgil, and Livy, but all else is doomed to "decay" (734-6).[9]

The section in which Byron translates Servius Sulpicius' letter to Cicero betrays a similar anxiety over humankind's[10] continual inability to adequately rebuild, its tendency to instead pile ruin upon ruin. Byron appends his own vision to the precise translation of the Roman letter:

> …I lay reclined
> Along the prow, and saw all these unite
> In ruin, even as he [Sulpicius] had seen the desolate sight;
>
> For Time had not rebuilt them, but uprear'd
> Barbaric dwellings on their shatter'd site….
> And the crush'd relics of their vanish'd might.
> The Roman saw these tombs in his own age,
> These sepulchers of cities, which excite
> Sad wonder, and his yet surviving page
> The moral lesson bears, drawn from such pilgrimage.
>
> That page is now before me, and on mine
> *His* country's ruin added to the mass
> Of perish'd states he mourn'd in their decline,
> And I in desolation: all that *was*
> Of then destruction *is*; and now, alas!
> Rome—Rome imperial, bows her to the storm,

---

9 It is worth noting that given the georgic metaphors which prevail throughout the poem, even the "decay" to which the rest of Rome is subject is potentially fruitful: like the dust and ashes which Florence has amassed to increase its cultural productivity, all of the ruins of Rome, by decaying, will serve to increase fertility in this currently barren space.

10 I've chosen to refer to this as "humankind" rather than follow the nineteenth century convention of referring to all human beings as men. It is just one of many strange products of the eerie lack of inhabitants in Byron's poem that there is a total absence of living female figures laboring in the landscape; but to be fair, there are also very few living men. Since the poet navigates history, his poem focuses on male historical figures and male agency—but these questions of gender, unfortunately, lie outside the scope of this paper.

In the same dust and blackness, and we pass
The skeleton of her Titanic form,
Wrecks of another world whose ashes still are warm. (ln 394-414)

Sailing along the Saronic Gulf, Byron traces the same route along the coast of Greece that Sulpicius had traveled and described, according to Byron's note, "as it then was, and now is" (151). Byron reclines on the prow of his ship and describes, first, the tombs which would already have been ruins (if somewhat less weathered) at the time of Sulpicius' letter: "Time had not rebuilt them, but uprear'd/ Barbaric dwellings on their shatter'd site," unimproving dwellings which only increase the affective and aesthetic value of "the last few rays of [the] far-scatter'd light" which seem interestingly conflated with the "crush'd relics of their vanish'd might." The agency is curiously mixed here: nominally, the stanza appears to blame abstract "Time" for its failure to rebuild the Greek ruins which Sulpicius then and Byron now view(ed) with "sad wonder." Time also appears to be blamed for "uprearing barbaric dwellings" at the site of the noble ruins, as though those barbaric architectural structures were Time's ugly head. But the barbaric dwellings, like the "yet surviving page" of Sulpicius, are the artifacts of man: it is man's failure as well as Time's that these ruins have not been rebuilt, a fact which might demystify the undisclosed "moral lesson" of Sulpicius' page and "such pilgrimage." Worse, Time's ravages have heaped the ruins of Sulpicius' civilization atop the state of decline which the Roman saw and mourned, so that Byron's experience, in moving through this space, is of ruin layered and massed upon ruin: what Sulpicius viewed in "decline," Byron views in "desolation" (and his sentence structure suggests that both the "perish'd states" and Byron himself are in this state). "Rome imperial" succumbs to "dust" and "blackness," and Byron's lament ends on perhaps the most overwhelming note of all, characterizing "Rome imperial" as a "Titanic skeleton," the still-recent "wreck" of another world. And yet this apparently desolate, hopeless image contains within it other notes. The Titanic skeleton and wreck both suggest the catastrophic geology of

Cuvier as well as its revolutionary associations. What man has failed to rebuild will perhaps be remedied in course of chaotically creative, regenerative Nature.

But envisioning Imperial Rome as a Titanic skeleton—as a massive fossil of an outworn and possibly grander time—also suggests the fossilization of the Eternal City, or the process by which Rome itself is transformed into an enormous rock, a geological artifact which resists human action or interpretation. In *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology*, Heringman repeatedly emphasizes the "otherness," awe, and "astonishment" which characterize what he calls the "aesthetic discourse on rocks" at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a discourse which "articulates the sense of a real, physical world, a planetary depth of experience that can either enable or counfound economic agency" (55). He defends his claim of otherness for rocks by asserting that his "emphasis…is on the other than human rather than other than self" (55). He goes on to explain that the real issue at stake in sublime rockiness is human agency:

> eM]any…accounts [of diminished self] associate the materiality of rock with limitations on human agency. The ultimate object of wonder is the rocks' resistance to aesthetic categories themselves: they do not simply become humanized or sacralized others, but stand outside this structure and give the lie to technological progress, artistic endeavor, and other forms of human ordering. …[P]oems by Wordsworth and Shelley…demonstrate this anxious fascination with the limits of form. (55-6)

We have already seen that for Goodman, one of the primary characteristics of eighteenth century and Romantic georgic is its tendency to self-test its mediating capacity, to stretch to the limit its capacity to order or beautify its subject matter and to peer warily through the window its lines leave open for viewing the mud and disorder which it has carefully versified. However, we can also see that the work which Heringman describes the rocks as resisting and making more difficult is precisely the subject matter of the georgic. These romanticized rocks stand at the boundary of man's capacity for ordering the world through technological progress, the creation of infrastructure, and artistic endeavor, all of which are part and parcel of the improving georgic

labor which Jupiter assigns to man by ending the Golden Age in the first books of Virgil's *Georgics.* Ultimately, it is the "purely negative qualities or absences that mark the boundaries of human agency" which most clearly typify both Heringman's rocks and Byron's ruins, structures that, as we have seen, repeatedly demonstrate the limitations of human georgic endeavors on objects determined to be reincorporated into mineral Nature.

If the rocky agency of material nature imposes boundaries on human agency, it also opens up a nineteenth-century materialist, aesthetic discourse that, like Catastrophist geology, creates the possibility of reading the slow reclamation of human artifacts by nature as positive, as simultaneously artistic and naturally occurring sublime. To explain this point, it is necessary to make a brief detour through Heringman's article on the aesthetic status of the Elgin Marbles at the beginning of the nineteenth century, "Stones so wonderous Cheap." Heringman argues that

> The Marbles rise to iconic status not just in spite of [their] deterioration…but also because of it. As a *positive* condition of their novelty as aesthetic objects, 'deterioration' also means 'ostentatious rockiness.' Their appearance as 'stones' in this double sense is a salient condition of the Marbles' novelty as aesthetic objects...(43)

Thus, the "…widely shared project of establishing the Parthenon sculptures as *close to nature*" (43) provides a discourse in which any ruined artifact can enjoy the status of an artistic or cultural symbol. One argument in favor of the British Museum's purchase of the Marbles was that they would ennoble and inspire the artwork of the masters of the growing British Empire—by providing wide public access to a brilliant example of high Greek culture that was simultaneously a natural object, signifying all the sublime magnificence and power of the mountains and marbles from which the forms were shaped. Thus, writes Heringman, "Across a wide formal range of contributions to this debate—including the *Select Committee Report* urging the purchase of the Marbles for the British Museum, poems by Byron and Hemans, and a cartoon

by Cruikshank…—the Elgin Marbles function as hybrid aesthetic objects" (44), a function which gives them all the status of both artistic works and economic, material resources.

Byron—as his poetry attests—loathed the transportation of the Elgin Marbles. This fact does not however negate the applicability of Heringman's evaluation of classical ruins in general (and the Marbles in particular) as dual aesthetic object by virtue of their closeness to both culture and nature. While Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* referred to the Marbles as "mutilated blocks of art" (1032) and regarded their transportation to Britain as ridiculous, *Childe Harold* II contains the record of his extreme affective response to visiting the Parthenon bereft of its own monuments:

> Here let me sit upon this massy stone,
> The marble column's yet unshaken base;
> Here, son of Saturn! was thy fav'rite throne,
> Mightiest of many such! Hence let me trace
> The latent grandeur of thy dwelling-place.
> It may not be: nor ev'n can Fancy's eye
> Restore what Time hath labour'd to deface.
>
> …But who, of all the plunderers of yon fane
> On high, where Pallas linger'd, loth to flee
> The latest relic of her ancient reign--
> The last, the worst, dull spoiler, who was he?
> Blush, Caledonia! such thy son could be!
> England! I joy no child he was of thine:
> Thy free-born men should spare what once was free;
> Yet they could violate each saddening shrine,
> And bear these altars o'er the long-reluctant brine.
>
> …Cold is the heart, fair Greece, that looks on thee,
> Nor feels as lovers o'er the dust they loved;
> Dull is the eye that will not weep to see
> Thy walls defaced, thy mouldering shrines removed
> By British hands which it had best behoved
> To guard those relics ne'er to be restored.
> Curst be the hour when from their isle they roved
> And once again thy hapless bosom gored,
> And snatch'd thy shrinking Gods to northern climes abhorr'd! (II, ln 82-88, 91-99, 127-135)

The "yet unshaken base" of the column enjoys the same category of dual aesthetic object by being a "massy stone" for Byron to sit on; the shrines themselves, by "mouldering," are being slowly reclaimed by vegetative nature. Their status, in these stanzas, seems to hover somewhere between monument built by or for the gods to occupy, inorganic object signifying the passage of time, and organic object transplanted to the cold, inhospitable, rocky climes of the British Isles, wholly inimical to their natures. Byron's "Fancy" cannot "restore what Time hath labour'd to deface," nor, we might infer, could "British hands" ever do so, as they had been "best behoved / To guard those relics ne'er to be restored." The monuments are simultaneously "relics" and the object of Time's transformative (if destructive) labor. Neither British hands nor Byron's imagination are equal to reversing scars which Time and the vicissitudes of imperialism have inflicted upon what little remains of the Parthenon. Rather, Byron gives the impression of being nearly as aware as Heringman that "In the imperial context, collected objects appear under the economic category of resources, while the global spread of antiquarianism, as it evolves into archaeology, expands the scope of the cabinet: …this sort of collecting of curiosities (institutionalized in the museum) tends to flatten distinctions among kinds of objects and kinds of knowledge, further assimilating the Marbles to 'natural resources'" (48-9). Byron's treatment of both ruins and human remains as potentially generative, in fact, treats those objects as natural resources in the same literal fashion as Britain's own choice to keep its spuriously acquired classical treasures.

The "literalism" of "the aesthetic agenda of materiality" knows almost no bounds where the Marbles are concerned (44). Not only has Elgin carted away entire pieces of the Parthenon, but an artist, sketching horses from the example of the Marbles, recounts the experience of drawing more effectively after a piece breaks off and injures his leg: "this accidental physical

component [of being hit by a piece of sculpture] sharpens the affective response to the Marbles' 'fleshiness' and massive forms" (48). We see this experience of materiality mirrored in Byron's own experience of walking amidst ruinous spaces, his fixation on remains and monuments as fertilizer for improved cultures, and, later, in Arnold's close description of the erosion of the floors of the abbey at Grand Chartreuse. It is the evolution, through the extremely literal material aesthetic discourse which arises out of science, culture, and imperialism during this debate, of an "architectural category of the monument [which] provides the only viable code for reading rocks whose ponderous size and inscrutable origins testify to an otherwise alien physicality. This is equally true for descriptive poetry and geology, which spends the eighteenth century elaborating the premise that rocks and landforms are 'monuments of the great changes that the globe has undergone'" (50). And, as a result of this conflation of monument and rocky erosion in a twinned discourse of improvement, eventually the Marbles as a "mass of ruins" can be understood to

> display the dual character of unimproved nature. The term 'ruin,' as applied indiscriminately throughout the eighteenth century to decaying Gothic structures as well as cliffs or piles of boulders that seemed to resemble them, has become transfigured as a principle of landscaping and of geological aesthetics such as Wordsworth's. Ruins in artificial form become a means of improving landscape, while the potential for economic improvement enhances the aesthetic interest of geological 'ruins.' (58)

And just as artificial ruins—or, in the case of Florence as Byron depicts it in the fourth canto, imported ruins—"become a means of improving landscape" and "geological ruins" contain the "potential for economic improvement," the slow reclamation of artifacts by nature allows those objects to have a greater yield both economically and culturally through their potential to generally edify and improve.

The potential generation which lies in the warm ashes of these geological wrecks points to Byron's solution to the problem of man's continually failing georgics: the geological theory and romantic aesthetics of his poetry allow him to imagine Nature itself as the master of

regenerative georgic. Even the most maudlin lines of thought take a turn for the better as they dwell on the aesthetic value of the natural, as when Byron turns from the contemplation of internal georgic to that of his environment:

> But my soul wanders; I demand it back
> To meditate amongst decay, and stand
> A ruin amidst ruins there to track
> Fall'n states and buried greatness, o'er a land
> Which *was* the mightiest in its old command,
> And *is* the loveliest, and must ever be
> The master-mould of Nature's heavenly hand,
> Wherein were cast the heroic and the free,
> The beautiful, the brave—the lords of earth and sea,
>
> The commonwealth of kings, the men of Rome!
> And even since, and now, fair Italy!
> Thou art the garden of the world, the home
> Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree;
> Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?
> Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
> More rich than other climes' fertility;
> Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced
> With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced. (217-234)

Even as Byron famously conflates his own state with that of his surroundings, the ruined landscape remains, if not the "mightiest," then the "loveliest;" the "master-mould of Nature's heavenly hand," while it has stopped producing the "heroic, the beautiful, the brave" has focused its craftsmanship on the landscape itself. Italy is the "garden" of the world, cultivated by the same Nature that produced its heroes; its economic, georgic yield consists of aesthetic abundance, whether natural or artistic. Once again, too, the language of catastrophe surfaces; however, far from being a sign merely of destruction, it is a relic of the "climes' fertility," the landscape's "glory," and deeply associated with the landscape's "ruin graced with an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced" but which is instead restored and improved through its interaction with the forces of nature.

To a certain extent, it seems that the best work that man can do is to raise monuments and allow them to become part of nature. The landscape is given an opportunity to right the wrongs of Dante's, Petrarach's, and Boccacio's burials before ever the people of Italy are: the narrator is incredulous that the bones of these men might be "resolved to dust," asking whether "their country's marbles [have] nought to say? / Could not her quarries furnish forth one bust? / Did they not to her breast their filial earth intrust?" (502-504). Even more important than the earth's potential to vomit up tributes to the heroes of letters, however, is its potential to consume the monuments to man's pride, forcing them to yield to the more plentiful aesthetics of rocky and organic beauty. Byron's narrator takes his time describing the burial site of a little-known Roman woman who, nevertheless, enjoys a powerful abode for her resting place:

> There is a stern round tower of other days,
> Firm as a fortress, with its fence of stone,
> Such as an army's baffled strength delays,
> Standing with half its battlements alone,
> And with two thousand years of ivy grown,
> The garland of eternity, where wave
> The green leaves over all by time o'erthrown;—
> What was this tower of strength? within its cave
> What treasure lay so lock'd, so hid?—A woman's grave.
>
> …I know not why—but standing thus by thee,
> It seems as if I had thine inmate known,
> Thou tomb! And other days come back on me
> With recollected music, though the tone
> Is changed and solemn, like the cloudy groan
> Of dying thunder on the distant wind;
> Yet could I seat me by this ivied stone
> Till I had bodied forth the heated mind
> Forms from the floating wreck which Ruin leaves behind. (883-891; 928-936)

By beginning not with the identity of either the monument or the remains inside it, Byron emphasizes the importance of the physical structure: a stout edifice with strength which belies its purpose. But just as the rocky strength obscures the meaning of this monument, the "garland of eternity" and the "green leaves over all by time o'erthrown" transform the object's functionality.

rather than bear testimony to the personality of the woman inside (on which Byron can only speculate: he wonders whether the woman was particularly virtuous, particularly old and well-remembered, or particularly young and beautiful at the time of her death) and about the motivation of the man who raised her monument (Byron asks us, viewing the structure, to "Behold his love or pride," seemingly indifferent to the ostensible reason for the existence of this "tower"). He directs his attention to the affective, aesthetic experience which the overgrown and weathered state of the tomb, and the "ivied stone" on which he sits, seems to impart to him through some more physical force. The tomb forces him to recollect "other days," "music" of "changed and solemn" tone, and through this tangible contact "body forth the heated minds…from the floating wreck which Ruin leaves behind." Byron's reverie extends through the landscape beyond this spot, again through a physical act of handling the remains of this piece of civilization:

> And from the planks, far shatter'd o'er the rocks,
> Built me a little bark of hope, once more
> To battle with the ocean and the shocks
> Of the loud breakers, and the ceaseless roar
> Which rushes on the solitary shore
> Where all lies founder'd that was ever dear.
> But could I gather from the wave-worn store
> Enough for my rude boat, where should I steer?
> There woos no home, nor hope, nor life, save what is here. (937-946)

At first glance, the land that Byron surveys from his (hypothetical) "bark of hope" is a dismal prospect. "The ceaseless roar / which rushes on the solitary shore" will later be echoed by Arnold's "Dover Beach" as a signifier of the aural tradition of listening to the endless erosive power of the ocean that, here, pushes ruins around its surface and onto the shore. Rather than surrender to this hopeless condition, Byron seems to make a conscious choice to identify not with the ruined, ephemeral works of men, but instead with the eternal, natural sounds of the wind and birds which are "native" to the Palatine (948-51). These natives, together with the same

Time which has "o'erthrown eternal garlands all over" the monument to the daughter of Metellus Creticus, have transformed the substance of the Palatine into a space plentiful with life and nature:

> Cypress and ivy, weed and wallflower grown
> Matted and mass'd together, hillocks heap'd
> On what were chambers, arch crush'd, column strown
> In fragments, choked up vaults, and frescos steep'd
> In subterranean damps where the owl peep'd,
> Deeming it midnight:--Temples, baths, or halls?
> Pronounce who can; for all that Learning reap'd
> From her research hath been, that these are walls—
> Behold the Imperial Mount! 'tis thus the mighty falls. (955-963)

Just as, in the scene which Goodman describes as the characteristic georgic image of the eighteenth century, the artifacts of war have sunk into the earth and re-emerged unrecognizable and decontextualized, the Palatine's structures are barely recognizable for all of the trees, weeds, flowers, and earthen matter which have heaped themselves over them. Chambers are replaced by "hillocks," arches "crush'd," columns "strown / in fragments" (almost like seeds haphazardly planted); buildings—"Temples, baths, or halls?"—are impossible to tell apart from one another. The notes supplied to this passage by Hobhouse, Byron's friend and collaborator to whom he dedicated the fourth canto, add that

> Your walks in the Palatine ruins, if it be one of the many days when the labourers do not work, will be undisturbed, unless you startle a fox in breaking through the brambles in corridors, or burst unawares through the whole of some shivered fragments into one of the half buried chambers which the peasants have blocked up to serve as stalls for their jackasses, or as huts for those who watch the gardens. (174)

Fascinatingly, the Palatine's transformation has enacted Virgil's redemptive georgic vision. The one-time site of Imperial Roman rule (with all its follies and degradations as well as its triumphs) has been erased by the georgic labors of time and by an agricultural working class which has put its transformed green spaces to practical use. In fact, the aesthetic and moral value of this space

is higher when ruined and reclaimed by georgic nature than when ruled by an intact culture. The "moral of all human tales" is that "History…Hath but *one* page,--'tis better written here" (964, 968-9). Even "Tully was not so eloquent as thou, / Thou nameless column with the buried base!" (982-3). The arch that confronts Byron is not "Titus' or Trajans? No—'tis that of time" (987). "Triumph, arch, pillar, all he doth displace / Scoffing" (988-9), even as "the eloquent air breathes—burns with Cicero" (1008) in a nearby field. The value of this space has surpassed that of the figures that built and inhabited it through the georgic intervention of time.

Byron's narrator comes gradually to the realization that Nature's potential also lies in the seeds of future generations, germinating deep below the surface. The post-lapsarian associations of georgic, together with their trappings of various ages of man (Golden and Iron Ages, for instance), preoccupy a series of stanzas on the legacy of the originals amongst whose statues and monuments the narrator wanders. The narrator asks whether the Capitoline Wolf continues to remember and protect Romulus and Remus, her "immortal cubs" rather than forgetting them:

> Thou dost; but all thy foster-babes are dead—
> The men of iron; and the world hath rear'd
> Cities from out their sepulchers: men bled
> In imitation of the things they fear'd
> And fought and conquer'd, and the same course steer'd,
> At apish distance; but as yet none have,
> Nor could the same supremacy have near'd… (792-799)

The descendants of the original leaders of Rome have failed even to live up to the course steered by "the men of iron" the she-wolf fostered. Looking at the landscape of Rome, the narrator asks, "What from this barren being do we reap?" (829), imagining generations "plodding," "Rotting from sire to son, and age to age, ? Proud of their trampled nature, and so die, / Bequeathing their hereditary rage / To the new race of inborn slaves…" (838-842).The georgic mode allows even the degeneration of these ages of men to contain something promising: the "rotting from sire to son" means that something, at some time, might be able to be "reaped" from the currently barren

land. Indeed, all of these generations, from the "rotting" sires and sons to the carefully collected dust of great men to the crumbling monuments contribute to the sort of mulch which Byron envisions as enriching the soil so that other "such seeds" (864) can germinate. Despite ages of tyranny,

> Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn but flying,
> Streams like the thunder-storm *against* the wind;
> Thy trumpet voice, though broken now and dying,
> The loudest still the tempest leaves behind;
> Thy tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind,
> Chopp'd by the axe, looks rough and little worth,
> But the sap lasts,—and still the seed we find
> Sown deep, even in the bosom of the North;
> So shall a better spring less bitter fruit bring forth. (ln 874-882)

Just as in Brewer's reading of Shelley's catastrophic geology provides that poet with a scientific analogue to his revolutionary political inclinations, so here, for Byron the cyclical nature of georgic seasons—represented by the tree that "hath lost its blossoms" but retains its sap as well as the earth which contains, "sown deep," the "seed" of a "less bitter fruit" which a "better spring" will "bring forth"—provides the perfect metaphorical analogue to the catastrophic geological ages which have the chaotic potential to build new worlds.

Catastrophist geology and materialist aesthetics give Byron access to a language which can read even the most destructive ravages of Time as potentially generative and revolutionary, making it relatively easy for Byron to progress through ruined landscapes, inhabiting them as though they were empty, "repeopling" them with his imagination, and turning away as necessary. His attitude toward preservation is confused at best. Preserving the ashes or bodies of heroes seems potentially generative in Byron, but they mostly act as fertilizer, and wrongful acts of collection and preservation earn his scorn and ridicule (as in his treatment of the Florentine who rifled through Petrarch's grave for a memento). We could also turn, for an example of Byron's deep ambivalence toward acts of futile preservation, to the strange episode in which a young

woman nurses her aged father: the image clearly partakes of the grotesque, and Byron turns hastily away from the ghostly tableau—which is at first invisible to him—rather than contemplate it too deeply.

III.

Despite an interval of only a few decades, a Victorian vision of preservation inspired by the excavation of Pompeii contains no trace of the ambivalence or reluctance toward preservation that Byron exhibits in these weird examples. In 1890, Frederic Harrison imagines Victorian England constructing its own "Pompeii for the Twenty-Ninth Century." In his vision, a sealed vault filled with relics would replicate all the best aspects of Pompeii. As Virginia Zimmerman describes this imagined project in *Excavating Victorians*, it would contain all of the suddenly ruined city's intrusions on the private sphere in the preservation of the quotidian—examples of modes of dress, post-office directories, and almanacs, a phonograph of Tennyson reading *The Princess*, works of popular fiction, an admixture of high and low culture since, as with Pompeii's graffiti, "certain curiosities may paint a richer picture of the age." The time capsule will differ primarily from the entombed city in its total lack of any accidental quality. As Harrison says, "These things should not be left to chance" (139-140).[11] The idea seems to have been a popular one. A newspaper clipping on "Current Thought" applauds Harrison's notion of a carefully selected vault to encapsulate Victorian England for future generations:

> The fate of the temples, the libraries, the theatres of old show clearly that they are not suitable repositories, and we may be fairly certain that our museums will have a similar fate. Mr. Harrison has made a proposal which, if carried out, will make him the best-known man of the 20th century. The vault will be quite as valuable a treasure house of knowledge as Pompeii, for its treasures will be selected by the

[11] The vault would also, as Zimmerman points out, lack some of Pompeii's grisly morbidity. Much of the fascination of Pompeii lies in its horror: the interrupted dinners are not far from the skeletons of the people who abandoned them, and the noble lady's dressing table mentioned later in this paper, used by Bulwer-Lytton to construct the character of Julia in his novel *Last Days of Pompeii*, is covered in jewelry and beauty implements suggestive of the absence of the woman forced by death to abandon them. Relics deliberately preserved in a sealed vault do not, perhaps have the same flavor of tragedy as Pompeii, but perhaps the reading which I perform of Arnold's poem would suggest that death and outmodedness would probably still necessarily cling to them. The New Zealander whom Macauley and Harrison imagine wandering through 29th century London might react not dissimilarly to Arnold in Grande Chartreuse.

best men of our day.

Only a Malthusian notion of a population too swollen for the earth to support it can cause the anonymous author to register a slight note of doubt that this idea is brilliant. The popular imagination, at least, was willing to pour the same amount of effort, and far more money, into preserving themselves as relics, just as we shall see that the monks of Arnold's poem do.

The difference between Byron's ambivalence toward preservation, which leads to his choice to instead invest his confidence and hope in a regenerative catastrophic geology, and the Victorian obsession not only with ruins in general, but with preserving and controlling their archaeological heritage is largely due to the paradigm shift away from Catastrophism in geology that saw the creation of deep time as a notion, and the consequent advent of evolutionary science. We can track this shift by way of a quick tour of some of Arnold's writings that are acknowledged to concern themselves with science. n a lecture entitled *Literature and Science* (1883), Arnold argues against Huxley's proposal to change the educational paradigm so that it would consist only of the writings of science and mathematics. According to Arnold, Huxley's engagement in this debate misrepresents Arnold by claiming that his ideal educational program consists only of *belles lettres*. In fact, Arnold's "best which has been thought and uttered in the world" consists of Euclid as well as Homer; it contains the best modern scientific writings (he cites Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Darwin) as well as works by Wordsworth and Byron. Arnold feigns humility in a tone of "tentative inquiry" as someone with "small acquaintance" (97) with the natural sciences (but deep curiosity about them, as he states earlier in the lecture). Can the sciences, he asks, adequately account for "the constitution of human nature?" Ultimately, he answers, no: literature is necessary for the satisfaction of "an invincible desire to relate [the] proposition[s of science] to the sense in us for conduct, and to the sense in us for beauty" (101). Past a certain point, for the majority of mankind, the natural sciences are "unsatisfying" and

"wearying" when conducted at length and without respite (102). Arnold, then, argues for the necessity of a literary mode or discourse that can intervene in the exhausting inability of science to construct meaningful narratives. In short, Arnold desires a didactic, moral, edifying poetry that fulfills the same function as eighteenth century georgic does for Byron, however much Arnold himself might join in the vitriol of the first generation Romantics against Pope.

This is the late Arnold. For an account of the early Arnold's attention to geology and deep time, we can turn to "Dover Beach," which, as is well known, grapples directly with the revelations of Lyell's *Principles of Geology*. The first stanza of "Dover Beach" declares that "the cliffs of England stand, / Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay" (4-5). The sea is famously calm and the air famously sweet, but the ocean itself strikes a discordant note against the apparent vastness and solidarity of the cliffs of Dover:

> Only, from the long line of spray
> Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
> Listen! you hear the grating roar
> Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
> At their return, up the high strand,
> Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
> With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
> The eternal note of sadness in. (7-14)

The grating roar of pebbles and the endless beginning and ceasing of waves, even the eternal note of sadness, or widely acknowledged to signify a poetic rendering of the sound of deep time, of the accumulation of geological ages according to the principles of Uniformitarianism. Principally championed by Lyell, Uniformitarianism describes a geological school of thought which "assumes that processes in action in the present are identical to those in action in the remote past…" a theory which incidentally requires a "vastly expanded time scale" (unlike Catastrophism, which was frequently used (albeit not by Cuvier) to squeeze the evidence of geological strata and extinction into the six thousand years of biblical history) (Zimmerman 4).

Thus, scholars like Virginia Zimmerman describes this noise as the "'grating roar' of uniformity: the small actions of the pebbles he hears in the present echo the same pattern occurring day after day for countless years" (4). Indeed, the poem so famously deals with deep time and a burgeoning disillusionment with the grand narratives of faith that *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*'s chapter on "Victorian poetry and science" treats "Dover Beach" as almost metonymic for the Victorian crisis of faith associated with the revelations of geology, even going as far as to read Darwinian evolution into the poem (somewhat anachronistically, as it was probably composed in the early 1850s despite its publication in 1867). More striking even than any resemblance which the poem's last lines' "confused alarms of struggle and flight" might bear to Darwin's *Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (Brown 146), however, is the fact that Arnold's choice of the cliffs of Dover for this poem correlates directly to a passage in Lyell's *Principles of Geology*. In "Destroying and Transporting Effects of Tides and Currents," Lyell describes, at length, the various sites in England where the ocean (the only noun in the chapter which consistently takes active verbs or verbs indicating that it possesses agency) slowly encroaches on the shore, destroying towns, swallowing chapels, and essentially slowly dissolving the geography of England itself by slow measures. Significantly, one of the sites of dissolution is Dover:

> "There are other records of waste in the county of Kent, as at Deal; and at Dover, where Shakspeare's cliff, composed entirely of chalk, has suffered greatly, and continually diminishes in height, the slope of the hill being towards the land… There was an immense landslip from this cliff in 1810, by which Dover was shaken as if by an earthquake, and a still greater one in 1772. We may suppose, therefore, that the view from the top of the precipice in the year 1600, when the tragedy of King Lear was written, was more 'fearful and dizzy' than it is now. (300-1)

Having read this, it is difficult to imagine that Arnold's fancy, in imagining the waves' continual motion as they "begin, and cease, and then again begin, / with tremulous cadence slow" to

weather away the shore with pebbles and water, was not also anxiously imagining the slow dissolution of the "vast" cliffs themselves together with Lyell, who tellingly imagines the cliffs as already vastly reduced from their dizzying heights at the composition of Shakespeare's tragedy.

The extensive reading and rereading of "Dover Beach" as dealing with deep time has led to a neglect of how Arnold's other poetry takes up such themes, occluding, in the process, the possibility of tracing the genealogy of these themes in georgic poetics and Byronism that it is my concern here to uncover. "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse"—the poem I will be reading to such ends—also deals with the massive paradigm shifts of nineteenth century grand narrative. This locodescriptive poem of Arnold's, like Byron's *Childe Harold*, takes as its task the problem of inhabiting a ruined culture. For Arnold, unlike Byron, regeneration is no longer an option. Just as England dissolves throughout the pages of Lyell and the lines of "Dover Beach," here, the (French) monastery is eroding (it erodes as a result of the feet of the very figures which maintain it!) and even the sublime landscape through which Arnold travels to reach his destination has an urgent, ghostly quality. Arnold takes the reader with him through forest, and up and down mountain, with injunctions to "hark!" "look!" "approach," "alight, and sparely sup, and wait" and "Knock," until at last "thou" come with him to the far removed but famous home of the Carthusians, an austere order of monks who daily reenact the rituals which countless knees have "worn" upon the floors themselves. The monks seem almost superfluous to "The silent courts, where night and day/ Into their stone-carved basins cold / The splashing icy fountains play" (31-33), for while the fountains, though ice cold, play animatedly, the monks themselves are merely "ghostlike…/Cowled forms brush by in gleaming white" (35-36) amidst "humid corridors" (34). But the monks here do more than wander amidst this spectral space and view its ruin: in addition,

they] take upon themselves the georgic task of effecting a suspension of history in this space. The poem that proffers them to its Victorian readership, then, in so doing reiterates the urgency of preserving the quotidian in reserved, sacred spaces and monuments as a means of offering future generations the ability to make sense of Victorian culture.

But before reading Arnold's poem in light of its georgic work of excavation and preservation, I will examine the implications of these same themes in the Victorian cultural construction of Pompeii as both an archaeological and a touristic site. As Zimmerman describes it, Pompeii occupies a space not unlike that of a fairy city in the Victorian imagination:

> Many writers allude to Sleeping Beauty to describe their magical powers to reverse the volcano's eruption and the passage of time. Like the castle in this fairy tale…the city of Pompeii seems frozen, its inhabitants sleeping yet quivering still with life; it falls to writers to awaken them…'Behind the Scenes at Vesuvius,' published in *All the Year Round* in 1863, characterizes Pompeii's buildings as 'all struck to silence like the Sleeping Beauty, only for a great many hundred years instead of one; and, in our day, so restored to light and life, that we see what the townspeople were doing in the house and in the street, in the month of August AD 79.' (111)

This is the Pompeii the Victorians prefer to remember. Such details as dinner still on the table, a lady's toiletries scattered over her dressing table, and children's marbles scattered on the ground make possible a perfect intrusion on the private sphere of nearly 1800 years before, as it was immaculately preserved by the volcano's eruption. This fascination with life suddenly interrupted (and thereby completely saved for posterity) persists in Victorian writing about Pompeii, which continued to present it in just this fashion even after archaeologists have moved and removed the site's finest artifacts to museums, reburied other interesting baubles so that tourists could enjoy the act of discovering them, and even settled soldiers with their families in some of the city's ruined houses (108-111). Thus, from travelogues to Bulwer-Lytton's novel *The Last Days of Pompeii*, the Victorians preferred to commemorate a Pompeii wherein to visit was to do precisely what the article cited above describes: to wander through a city where the

quotidian events of an August day in the first century AD are perfectly preserved, and can be experienced immediately, as though the temporal distance between Victorian England and Roman Pompeii could be elided by entering the space of the ruined city.

However, this illusion took some work on the part of the Victorian tourist, for, as I mentioned before, nineteenth century Pompeii did have living inhabitants as well as ones fossilized in their last horrific moments. Zimmerman states that John Delaware Lewis, writing in *Household Words* in 1852, "notes the oddity of seeing laundry hung up to dry among the remains of the dead city" (111)—an oddity which should recall Byron and Hobhouse's description of the repurposed Palatine. Moreover, at least as discordant as soldiers moving in and washing their clothes amidst the ruins, parties of British men would sometimes have dinner in Pompeiian dining halls:

> The author of "Pompeii by Torchlight" describes his experience dining with friends at Pompeii. He remarks on the absurdity of 'respectable gentlemen in long-tailed coats, boots, and beaver hats' (66) supping in the same hall where long-dead Pompeian nobles would have eaten. The Romantic excursion, dining by candlelight amidst the picturesque ruins, worked on the imaginations of the participants to bring back to life those who dined there last. (112)

Zimmerman interprets this event seriously, and treats equally seriously another group who, in 1837, "lodged for two weeks at Pompeii with his family and servants…The *Times* reports they dressed in Roman apparel and spent their time reading the classics" (112)—although she does admit that they "play at" reanimating the city. It seems plausible that "the noise of their conversation and the clink of cutlery brought echoes of the past into the present," and enacted a certain coevalness, bridging a temporal gap between the inhabitants of these spaces in the first century and the stuffily appareled men. Still, these men—who doubtless ate boiled British fare with forks instead of fingers—their manner, their dress, and the fact that they are the only humans who inhabit the space, given the absence of servants, of the rituals that might have

accompanied dinner for the house's former inhabitants, must also have created for them a sense of uneasiness and spookiness in what could ultimately only become a somewhat morbid dining experience. Likewise, the oddly lonely British family, wearing togas and reading Victorian publications (books, not papyri) of Greek and Roman texts, could only have seemed like an odd and uneasy intrusion on the ruined space. The Victorians may have played at closing the gap between themselves and the Romans, seeing their own domestic, private sphere reflected in the excavations of Pompeii, but the place could not have held the interest that it did, for them, if they had not also been always aware of the intrusions they brought upon that dead, ruined space.

It is just such a sense of barely-permitted intrusion upon an otherworldly space that characterizes "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse." Arnold immediately creates a sense of length and distance in the first four lines:

> Through Alpine meadows soft-suffused
> With rain, where thick the crocus blows,
> Past the dark forges long disused,
> The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes. (1-4)

Arnold delays our arrival at the subject and verb of the sentence—"the mule-track…goes"—with three long prepositional phrases. The first line's enjambment stretches it, too, beyond the typical confines of iambic tetrameter and threatens to obscure the reader's sense of what softly suffuses the Alpine meadows. This slow, lengthy movement through literal and metric space gains another dimension in the third line, where "dark forges long disused" intimate that the mules carry the reader into a past whose relics are no longer used—or, perhaps, useful—in the present. Soon, Arnold commands the reader to "hark!" "Far down, with strangled sound / Doth the Dead Guier's stream complain" (9-10); the "strangled" sound of the gurgling stream compounds the luck which has named the portion of the Guiers River that flows down past the monastery the

"Guiers Mort," as opposed to the "Guiers Vif" which it joins in the valley. The third stanza more clearly suggests archaeology and extinction:

> Swift rush the spectral vapours white
> Past limestone scars with ragged pines
> Showing—then blotting from our sight!
> Halt—through the cloud-drift something shines!
> High in the valley, wet and drear,
> The huts of Courrerie appear. (13-18)

The "spectral vapours" alternately bury and uncover the "limestone scars," physical, geological traces of a time when the valley was entirely under water (and the reason that it makes such a poor environment for the "ragged pines"), a narrative which the observant and persistent viewer can construct. The cloud drift also uncovers the "huts of Courrerie," which appear as if by magic in a position oxymoronically "high in the valley."[12]

The poem's speaker—presumably, in this case, not far removed from Arnold himself—commands the reader to "Look!" with him "through the showery twilight gray" and guess at what their gazes discover higher in the mountains--perhaps a "palace" of some French kings?—demanding that the reader become involved in the poet's dual act of excavation and intrusion. He immediately does the work of interpretation:

> Approach, for what we seek is here!
> Alight, and sparely sup, and wait
> For rest in this outbuilding near;
> Then cross the sward and reach that gate.
> Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come
> To the Carthusians' world-famed home. (25-30)

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12 Compare the seemingly magical appearance of the town of Courrerie, located near the monastery, to the fairy tale language which persists and permeates accounts even of a no longer freshly excavated Pompeii. Consider, too, that it was somehow not problematic, for such allusive descriptions, that only the stuff of Pompeii was recovered, and the plaster casts which filled the impressions left by the dead in the ashes: their literary excavations were sufficient to revive the city imaginatively even as it continued to be permeated with evocative traces of the dead.

The reader clearly intrudes upon this space. She must be instructed how to move, she must wait in an outbuilding for some kind of clearance or preparation, she must knock for permission before she can finally enter the "world-famed home" of ascetic monks.[13] The monks themselves, on the other hand, at once construct, preserve, and constitute the monument in which they live. Descriptions of the monks' behaviors and habits accompany descriptions of the chapel silent but for the monk's prayers, cries, and the rustles that result from their movements of kneeling, "wrestling," rising, and taking the Host. "White uplifted faces stand" for only a moment before "Each takes, and then his visage wan / Is buried in his cowl once more" (41, 43-44), underscoring the monks' anonymity as each contributes to the "knee-worn floor" and sleeps on the wooden plank that will become his coffin, just as hundreds, perhaps thousands, of their predecessors have done. In short, the monks simultaneously preserve and re-enact the traces of the faith which they represent so thoroughly that Arnold can declare that "All are before me! I behold / The House, the Brotherhood austere!" (ln 64-5). He stands at a more complete, but no less fallen, monument to a dead religion than does his imagined pagan:

> …as, on some far northern strand,
> Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek
> In pity and mournful awe might stand
> Before some fallen Runic stone--
> For both were faiths, and both are gone. (80-84)

The monastery, no less than Pompeii or the fallen Runic stone, is a ruin, an architectural trace of a dead culture (in this case, the Catholic church specifically, probably synecdoche for a Judeo-Christian worldview in particular). The main difference between Grande Chartreuse and Pompeii is that the monastery escapes having its picturesque, pitiful, and awe-inspiring beauty marred by

[13] My choice to continue using the feminine pronoun for the sake of consistency and of avoiding a messy he/she construction raises an interesting question that is unfortunately only tangential to this paper—considering the fact that women were (and still are) not allowed in the "Carthusians' world famed home," the existence of a female, interloping reader in this anachronistic, deathly space which Arnold constructs through the ekphrastic portion of his poem is a complicated one.

the traces of the present. There are no eccentric English men in costumes attempting clumsy medieval re-enactments in the monastery, unless one counts the virtual presence of poet and reader. The monastery is also spared the additional layers of war and decay which trouble Byron in Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* as he views the ruins of Italy (although it loses as much as it gains here, since this mummified space has nothing of the potential for catastrophic georgic regeneration which Byron envisions for Italy as he surveys the ruins of classical culture). This is also not the multi-layered space where the past lurks darkly under the present, waiting to be illuminated, that Kate Flint describes in "The Buried City." By occupying this space, filling it with ritual and allowing only the rarest and most reverent visitors, the monks themselves perform a georgic task of artifaction through the continuous excavation and performance of a defunct culture, becoming living ruins more truly than any Englishman in coattails eating his dinner at an ashy table.

However, consideration of yet another aspect of Pompeii as a popular site for touristic excavation may reveal a greater, more meaningful similarity between the ruined city and Arnold's Grande Chartreuse. According to Zimmerman, "Austen Henry Layard describes the practice of reburying interesting objects so that visitors could have the satisfaction of uncovering them…the staged excavations Layard describes highlight the importance of the dig and the discovery" (106). The success of this practice in drawing tourists, and the satisfaction they doubtless derived from making important discoveries, go without saying; it also goes without saying that these fake excavations strike the modern reader as just as ridiculous as the week-long costumed re-enactment and the coat-tailed men in the ruined dining room. But Zimmerman's discussion of the "performance aspects of archaeology," and the "central importance of the

archaeologist as an interpreter," make this popular play at archaeology at least as fascinating as it is humorous. Zimmerman quotes Shawn Malley:

> 'Archaeology as performance is, then, a way of articulating the relationships we have with the past, and a mode of understanding the roles of artifacts in social practices and identities. In the face of loss, decay and forgetfulness, performance takes of the material past and reanimates it in and for the present' (2004, 3)…The false excavations Layard describes can surely be considered performances: the scene is set for the excavator to assume center stage and, with the apparent ease of an expert, make a remarkable find. A true excavator…has selected certain items that visitors will find impressive….Of course, the performance has another, more interesting layer: the individuals who lay the ground, literally, for the discovery are themselves staging the relationship with the past. (106-7)

For Zimmerman's interpretation of Pompeii, this act of "staging the relationship with the past" reveals the complicity of the archaeologists with a system which prioritizes the individual find and the interesting object over any attempt at a more holistic creation of a historical space, such as we find in the meandering narrative of *Childe Harold*. Yet these archaeologists who find and stage the discovery of the unique artifact bear a startling relationship to the monks who create the landscape of the monastery, a landscape that has been preserved not through the incidental catastrophe of a volcano but through the accident that no catastrophe has dissolved the monasteries of France or disrupted the monks' ghostly but deadly earnest re-enactments.

Arnold's poem, then, becomes a curiously twinned experience of archaeology. The monks themselves "lay the ground … for the discovery" of themselves, creating their relationship to the past through their insistence on continuing to be ruins, their refusal to allow the past to intrude. For the last lines of the poem are precisely that: Arnold imagines that the world outside, in hunters, baying dogs, "gay dames," "Laughter and cries," and particularly the "bugle-music on the breeze / Arrests them with a charmed surprise / Banner by turns and bugle woo: *Ye shy recluses, follow too!*" (ln 183-192). But Arnold imagines that the monks reply that it is "too late:"

Too late for us your call ye blow…

Long since we pace this shadowed nave;
We watch those yellow tapers shine…
Fenced early in this cloistral round
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
How should we grow in other ground?
How can we flower in foreign air?
--Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease;
And leave our desert to its peace!' (ln 196-210)

The monks, for nameless, faceless generations, have perfectly preserved themselves, their landscape (envisioned simultaneously as a lush, isolated forest and a barren "desert"), and their culture through ritual, carefully closing out the world that might intrude and disrupt their archaeological performance (which thereby enables that of Arnold, the archaeologist-poet whose georgic task is to make some sense of vanishing faith and cultures). What is more, they even describe themselves in terms reminiscent of those used by the nineteenth century archaeologist Layard, who, in *Nineveh and its Remains*, constantly writes that the remains he excavates, "'entire when first exposed to view,…crumbled into dust as soon as touched.' Thus copper helmet, iron armour, copper vessels, painted frescoes, ivories, all 'fell to pieces almost immediately on exposure to the air'" (Daniel 155). Like the Egyptian remains disturbed from their carefully sealed tombs and taken out into the open air, the monks imagine themselves withering and perishing outside of the carefully preserved ruin of their monastery. Only the archaeologist-writer (or, in this case, poet) can display to the world this particular relic of a culture now fully outmoded.

Despite his affective investment in the task that the monks perform, Arnold's poem contains an undercurrent of awareness of the artificiality of the perfectly preserved ruin that the monks have created out of and for themselves. Arnold notes the presence of the abbey's garden, calling it "overgrown" and pointing the reader's attention to its plants:

See, fragrant herbs are flowering there!
Strong children of the Alpine wild
Whose culture is the brethren's care;
Of human tasks their only one,
And cheerful works beneath the sun. (56-60)

The editor of the collection I am using writes that the "fragrant herbs" refer "to Chartreuse, the liqueur that the monks make from aromatic herbs and brandy and sell as a source of income." This stanza, then, performs two tasks: it describes the monks' single "human task" and the source of all of their "cheerful works," reminding the reader that the quotidian work of monks is the literally georgic task of tending to plants, or bees in an effort to secure their physical livelihoods through the production of food. But he also alludes, albeit obtusely, to the connections of georgic labor to economic production and labor: the monks not only produce the means of their livelihoods, but also purchase those means through commerce, directly tying them to the world outside. On the one hand, this might suggest that Arnold is not fully under the monastery's spell: however the monks might refuse the encroachment of the outside world in the imagined verbal response and in their everyday actions, they must purchase the illusion of their state and value as relics through engaging in trade with the outside world they nominally eschew. On the other, this direct acknowledgment of the georgic labor of all monks, and the ways in which that labor can and does fulfill the worldly needs of the monastery's surroundings—particularly the especially worldly need of liquor!—suggests that all of the monks labors, including those toward the preservation of their defunct cultures, address the needs of men like Arnold whose most direct alliances are to the modern world (even if what those men need is a palliative or intoxicant).

Thus, the literal georgics of cultivating plants for an economic yield—the "human tasks" which the monks perform—reinforce the cultural georgics which the monks enact in defiance of the slow decay of their monastery, the fact that the whole world has cast off their faith and

practice in favor of a science which threatens to efface human agency and performance. As we have already seen, Arnold's poem anticipates the impulse, as the nineteenth century draws to a close, to arrange and sow in the earth the artifacts of Victorian culture in anticipation of the 29th century, and the inevitable evolution or destruction of human culture as the Victorians know it, as it can no longer be considered immune to the vicissitudes of deep, erosive Time. Of course, Harrison's project never comes to fruition: it is unlikely that, as I briefly imagined, he constructed it in secret and nestled it, as planned, in Salisbury Plain. For less fanciful evidence of late-century concerns with the preservation of Victorian artifacts, we might turn to a text published roughly simultaneously: Darwin's conclusions on the preservation of traces attained through the close study of worms, the project to which he devoted the greater part of his waning energies at the end of his life. According to Jonathan Smith, who concludes his book on Darwin and visual culture with a discussion of the scientist's final work, writes that in *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms*, Darwin argues that

> The rich layer of surface soil…is created, turned over, and continually replenished by worms. Castings, blown by wind and washed by rain, are a major component of erosion and thus of geological denudation. Even archaeologists have reason to be grateful to worms, for artifacts and ancient ruins are gradually buried in castings, which protect and preserve them. (244-245).

In perhaps the most perfect illustration of the conflict thrown upon the Victorians by science in general and by geology and Darwin in particular, all the stuff of the world, even the preservation of man's culture, is an accident of the slow accumulation of the impersonal activities of worms who are totally indifferent to the cultures their excrescences protect. Smith writes that Darwin cheerfully glorifies the worms to which he devoted all the time and observation that he does in each of the experiments he recounts in *On the Origin of Species*:

> He gave his worm castings the same visual treatment accorded to architectural monuments and antiquarian or archaeological artifacts… [T]hese monuments and artifacts would not exist, or not exist as they do, were it not for worm castings.

> The remains of Roman towns and fallen monoliths at Stonehenge have been buried in worm castings, yet this is not presented as degradation and ruination but as preservation. The burial is…the building-up of earth by worms, which are themselves elevated not as grave diggers but as builders. Worms have played an important part in the natural and human history of the world, in a sense making human culture possible. Yet their preservation of ancient monuments is as inadvertent as their creation and aeration of the soil. (252)

I close, then on the note of a sort of georgics of worms: by the end of the century, Darwin has begun the work of turning the nineteenth century imagination away, once again, from convictions of Victorian Britain's agency in preserving and creating the inevitable ruin of its culture and empire. Where Arnold the archaeologist-poet cultivates a Victorian georgic through the collection and interpretation of artifacts, Darwin, among the same ruins as both Byron and Arnold, demonstrates again the extent to which he does the work of converting the acts of recovering, collecting, and maintaining historical artifacts to the leveling and anxiety inducing realm of natural history.

The science of the late nineteenth-century, then, returns us from a human georgic of preservation to a georgic of the forces of nature. However, that same natural history can no longer, as it does in Byron, provide a series of transformative, redemptive georgics. Instead, in the wake of deep time and Lyell, of a notion of a world which will only be transformed in its slow consumption by erosive forces—and, indeed, the slow revelation that man is no exception to the forces of evolution and extinction which effect other species—the agency of this new georgic of preservation is safest in the metaphysical hands of the mindless creatures which animate the soil. For Darwin, no amount of deliberate kneeling, no number of feet of carefully constructed concrete, could preserve the monuments of man's culture so well as the accidental and inadvertent cover provided by the excrement of innumerable worms.

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